

CLAIMS

I claim:

1. A method of providing a broadcast/multicast at least in part over a circuit-switched network, comprising:

receiving at a switch a call directed to a called number;

determining whether the switch has an active connection to the called number;

if the switch has an active connection to the called number:

merging the call with the active connection; and

if the switch does not have an active connection to the called number:

routing the call to a next switch.

2. The method of claim 1 wherein the call is from a device comprising one of a wired station or a wireless station.

3. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

if the switch has an active connection, the switch:

incrementing a counter; and

storing caller identification information.

4. The method of claim 3 wherein the caller identification information includes a trunk and line identifier.

5. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

if the switch does not have an active connection, the switch:

changing an activity indicator to active;

incrementing a counter; and

storing caller identification information.

6. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of merging the call with the active connection includes assigning the call to a time slot used by the active connection.

7. The method of claim 1, further comprising:  
determining whether the switch serves the called number.

8. The method of claim 1, further comprising:  
determining whether the next switch serves the called number.

9. The method of claim 1, further comprising:  
if the switch does not have an active connection,  
querying one or more switches for an active connection.

10. The method of claim 9, further comprising:  
selecting one or more switches to query for an active connection,  
wherein the selection of one or more switches to query depends upon  
either static factors or dynamic factors.

11. The method of claim 9, further comprising:  
if a plurality of the one or more switches queried has an active connection,  
using count information to select one of the plurality of the one or more switches queried as the  
next switch.

12. The method of claim 9, wherein one of the one or more switches queried will be the next switch.

13. The method of claim 1, further comprising:  
determining a next switch to route the call to,  
wherein the determination is based upon static factors.

14. The method of claim 13, wherein the static factors include routing the call to a predetermined switch.

15. The method of claim 1 further comprising:  
determining a next switch to route the call to,  
wherein the determination is based upon dynamic factors.

16. The method of claim 15 wherein the dynamic factors are selected from the group consisting of least-cost routing and load sharing.

17. The method of claim 1 wherein the step of routing the call to a next switch includes routing the call with instructions to merge the call with an active connection should one exist at the next switch.

18. The method of claim 1 wherein at least one link in the broadcast/multicast is over a data network.

19. The method of claim 18 wherein the data network is the Internet.

20. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

repeating the steps of receiving, determining, and routing until either a switch with an active connection or a switch serving the called number is reached.

21. A method for adding a caller to a broadcast/multicast in a circuit-switched network, comprising:

receiving a call at a first switch directed to a called number;

determining whether a connection to the called number is already established at a second switch;

if the connection is already established at the second switch, routing the call to the second switch; and

merging the call with the active connection at the second switch.

22. The method of claim 21 wherein the step of determining whether an active connection to the called number is already established at a second switch includes querying the second switch.

23. A method of dropping a caller's station from a broadcast/multicast in a circuit-switched network, comprising:

signaling from a first switch to a second switch to indicate that the caller's station is to be dropped from the broadcast/multicast, and

if the second switch is not a switch where a call from the caller's station was originally merged into an active connection, then

the second switch signaling a third switch to indicate that the caller's station is to be dropped from the broadcast/multicast.

24. The method of claim 23 further comprising:

if the second switch is not a switch where a call from the caller's station was originally merged into an active connection,

the second switch decrementing a counter.

25. The method of claim 24 further comprising:

if the counter equals zero,

the second switch deactivating an activity indicator.

26. The method of claim 24 further comprising:

if the counter equals zero,

the second switch maintaining an activity indicator in an active state.

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